

"Four Years in the White North"

By W. B. McCORMICK.

REAR ADMIRAL PEARY has done something more than discover the north pole; he has established a technique of Arctic exploration work that is the most perfect thing of its kind known to man. Those who follow it down to the last detail win success, as witness the triumph of Amundsen in the Antarctic and the tragedy of Scott; for there can be no gainsaying the fact that it was mainly because Amundsen followed Peary's technique of Arctic travel that he was so successful, while Scott's untried novelties in polar exploration were the chief reasons for his failure.

It was chiefly for the reason that he had worked under Peary in a previous polar expedition and because he was thoroughly imbued with the American naval officer's knowledge of Arctic travel that Donald B. MacMillan's four years of Arctic exploration were so uniformly successful and so free from the pitiful tragedies that were the portion of the earlier explorers in the desolate northern world.

Hunting for Crocker Land.

Primarily, MacMillan went North to determine if Crocker Land, which Peary believed he saw in 1906 northward of Grant Land, really existed, a belief that had survived for ninety years and which five men of standing in Arctic knowledge have all given reasons for. In addition to this MacMillan planned to search for other lands west and southwest of Axel Heiberg Land; to penetrate into the interior of Greenland between the 77th and 78th parallels of north latitude studying meteorological and glaciological conditions

on the summit of the great ice cap, and to study scientific conditions throughout the region to be traversed, all of it lying above the 77th parallel.

He proved that Crocker Land did not exist, but he accomplished much more than this in the remaining three years of his stay in the Arctic. He met with some disappointments, it is true, notably in his attempt to explore King Christian Island. But he put a very noteworthy success to his credit in his detailed exploration in 1917 of the western coast of Smith Sound from Cape Sabine to Clarence Head, a land that had remained practically unvisited by man since the Nares expedition in 1875-76.

Getting Ready at Etah.

Accompanied by six companions, all scientists except Allen and Small, respectively electrician and cook of the expedition, MacMillan left the Brooklyn navy yard in July, 1913, on board the Diana, and after the usual trials that seem inevitably to beset Arctic expedition vessels between Sydney, Cape Breton and Etah, Greenland, the ship arrived at Etah on August 26. Four days later the Diana had been unloaded and was out of sight around Cape Alexander on her way home, leaving MacMillan in the most northern settlement in the world, which was "seriously congested with nineteen men, women and children."

Then began the business now familiar to all readers of Peary's books, of preparations for winter and the spring advance. This included training and hardening dogs, collecting meat and laying down caches in preparation for the real work of the expedition, the spring march over the ice of Ellesmere Land toward Crocker Land, far out on the Polar Sea. The reader familiar with modern narratives of Polar exploration will find here again the record of unending days of toil over scientific work, sledging trips up and down the coast in search of meat, with the inevitable dangers and discomforts lightly passed over. Also he will enjoy reading the menus of the Thanksgiving and Christmas day meals of that year, which show that in the land of pemmican cocktails, Little Neck clam broth, plum pudding and apple pie are not unknown when one goes exploring under the aegis of the American Museum of Natural History and its generous friends.

The Grand Mirage.

The first step toward the Crocker Land expedition was taken on December 6, when Ekblaw and Lieut. Fitzhugh Green of the United States Navy started for Cape Sabine with the first load of supplies for the first advanced depot. But MacMillan did not actually start until February 13, 1914. His route took him across Ellesmere Land to Bay Fjord, northward past Fosheim and Schei Island, to Cape Thomas Hubbard on the northernmost point of Axel Heiberg Land.

Sickness of both dogs and men drove MacMillan back to Etah once to make a fresh start on March 10. By April 11 the party reached Cape Thomas Hubbard.

On April 21, after marching across the Polar Sea toward Crocker Land, they saw: "What a land! Hills, valleys, snow-capped peaks extending through at least 126 degrees of the horizon." One of the Eskimos "thought it was mist." He was right; for a few hours later the fair vision had disappeared.

Three days later the observations of the party showed them to be 150 miles from Cape Thomas Hubbard, and if Peary had been right they should have been thirty miles inland. And yet there was not a thing in sight but the polar ice, "not even our almost constant travelling companion, the mirage." They were back at Etah by the end of May.

A Cache 40 Years Old.

In the spring of 1915 Tanquary crossed Ellesmere Land, penetrated Greely Fjord, crossed by Hazen Lake to Fort Conger and then returned to Etah by way of Robeson and Kennedy Channels and Kane Basin, giving a spirited account of his lonely journey in one of the appendices to the main body of the text. In the spring of 1916 MacMillan crossed Ellesmere Land and reached the northeastern shore of King Christian Island, but was prevented from making explorations of it by bad weather and a shortage of meat. In the spring of 1917 he made a long and detailed exploration of the western coast of Smith Sound along Ellesmere Land, starting on March 27, returning to Etah on April 9.

In that interval he had found a cairn

with a barrel from Nares's ship Alert, cached by Commander Markham in 1876, and in so excellent a state of preservation that the record contained in it is reproduced in these pages. A short distance away he found two letters, one addressed to Capt. Nares by Allen Young, that was written August 24, 1876.

Capt. Nares stood within twenty feet of that tin cylinder wrapped in sail cloth in which MacMillan found the letters and never saw them. So strange are the vicissitudes of Arctic travel!

On this first trial MacMillan did not reach as far south as he had planned, and starting again on May 10 he was back before the end of the month, having reached his "farthest south" within sight of Cape Clarence. Sunday, July 29, saw the arrival of the relief ship Neptune under command of Capt. Bob Bartlett; and there the narrative proper ends, for the expedition reached Sydney on its return on August 24. MacMillan's "four years in the white north" were finished.

In addition to the 322 pages of this most interesting narrative by the leader of the expedition there are seven appendices, the most striking one being W. Elmer Ekblaw's record of his journey across northern Ellesmere Land in 1915, where, it may be mentioned, he named one place Louise Homer Land because of his

deep admiration for that singer. Ekblaw also describes *The Summer at North Star Bay* in 1914—frozen toes preventing him from accompanying MacMillan and Green to the north; *Across the Ice Fields of Melville Bay* to visit the relief ship Danmark, which never reached Etah; *The Visit to the Meteorite*, and *The Vegetation About Borup Lodge*, this being the name of the party's Etah home in honor of the young Arctic explorer whose death prevented him from sharing with MacMillan the honors of the expedition.

The many pictures in the book are excellent, but the large map is very unsatisfactory in that it does not show all the place names (Axel Heiberg Land is not identified at all) and does not agree with the text as to the spelling of "fjord," which is also spelled fiord in the text.

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